

Information on economic trends

May 2017

Summary

The beginning of 2017 was marked by the continuation of an economic growth almost as intense as at the end of the previous year. The unemployment rate decreased additionally in the first three months of the current year, while employment and gross wages increased relative to the previous quarter. In March, consumer prices increased by 0.3% at a monthly level, mostly because of the seasonal growth of the prices of clothing and footwear, while at an annual level inflation slowed down, mostly driven by the prices of energy and unprocessed food. The CNB continued to pursue an expansionary monetary policy while maintaining the stability of the kuna exchange rate against the euro, and the liquidity of the domestic financial system remained at a high level in April. Net external debt increased moderately in the first two months of 2017. The Excessive Deficit Procedure Report confirmed the strong fiscal consolidation achieved in 2016, and available data suggest that favourable fiscal developments continued at the beginning of 2017.

The GDP nowcasting model shows that real economic activity increased by 0.6% in the first quarter of 2017 relative to the previous three months, which was almost identical to the growth recorded at the end of 2016. The beginning of the year was marked by a sharp decline in industrial production on a quarterly basis (down 4.0%), since the increase in production in March was not robust enough to offset the decrease recorded in the first two months. In the period from January to March, production fell in all of the main industrial groupings except intermediate goods (Figures 3 and 4). By contrast, in January and February, construction was up by 1.3% from the average for the last quarter of 2016 (Figures 5 and 6). In a trend noticeable from the beginning of 2014, the real retail trade turnover continued climb in the first quarter of the current year, growing by 1.5% at a quarterly level (Figure 7).

The results of the Consumer Confidence Survey from April 2017 point to a notable worsening in household expectations (consumer confidence index dropped to the level recorded in mid-2016). The deterioration in consumer confidence is primarily the consequence of unfavourable expectations of households concerning the economic and financial situation for the following year, which is probably the reflection of fears concerning the financial problems in the Agrokor Group. With regard to business confidence, the results of the survey on the expectations of business entities show a continuation in April 2017 of the upward trend in confidence in the construction activity noticeable since early 2014. A continuation of the growth of confidence in industry was also evident. Expectations in trade did not change much from the beginning of the year, but optimism in service activities continued to deteriorate moderately (Figure 8).

The favourable labour market developments that marked 2016 continued in the first three months of 2017. The number of employed persons at a quarterly level grew at a similar pace as at the end of the previous year, or up by almost 2% from the same period in 2016. There was a notable acceleration of the growth in the number of employed persons in industry and construction activities (Figure 14). The number of unemployed persons continued to decrease, in particular reflecting the outflows based on employment. As a result, the registered unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) dropped to 13.2% in March, a level last recorded in 2008, i.e. the last year before the beginning of the crisis (Figure 15). However, it is worth noting that the level of employment was considerably lower than it was before the crisis, so that the above decrease in the unemployment rate reflects the shrinking in the labour force. With respect to the current trend in wages, at the beginning of 2017 gross wages continued to grow across the board (Figure 16). The acceleration in the growth of gross wages in construction and service activities is notable, and may probably be linked to the problem of labour shortages in specific types of occupations.

In March, consumer prices rose by 0.3% from February (Table 1), primarily as a result of the seasonal increase in the prices of clothing and footwear. The price increase was offset by a significant decrease in the prices of vegetables and energy (refined petroleum products, solid fuels and gas). The annual rate of consumer price inflation slowed down, from 1.4% in February to 1.1% in March, primarily due to the prices of energy and unprocessed food (Figure 18). The contribution of energy prices to overall inflation decreased primarily because of lower prices of refined petroleum products, which was reflected by the fall in the prices of crude oil in the world market (Figure 19), but also because of the base period effect (the growth of prices in the same month of 2016). The decrease in the prices of unprocessed food was mostly the result of a notable deceleration of the annual growth of the prices of vegetables. On the other hand, core inflation accelerated moderately in March to 1.4% (from 1.3% in February), mostly because of the increase in the annual rate of change of processed food (mainly milk, oil and meat) and nondurable household goods.

After a notable strengthening in the trade in goods in the last quarter of 2016, the beginning of 2017 was marked by a slight increase in goods exports and the decline in imports. Total goods exports increased by 0.8% in January and February relative to the average of the previous quarter, the main factor being the exports of the narrow aggregate, which excludes ships and oil (Figure 10). The largest contribution to their growth (7.2%) came from the more robust exports of electricity and chemical products, notably medical and pharmaceutical products, some of which had been imported earlier for finishing or distribution to the markets of third countries. The decrease in total imports of goods by 1.3% in January and February relative to the average of the previous quarter was due to the decline in the imports of oil and refined petroleum products, as well as ships (Figure 11). If those goods divisions are excluded, the imports of the narrow aggregate continued to grow (1.1%), with the strengthening of the growth of imports of electricity, natural and manufactured gas, and capital equipment (Figure 12), while imports of medical and pharmaceutical products decreased after growing strongly at the end of 2016.

The exchange rate of the kuna against the euro was predominantly stable in April. The exchange rate of the domestic currency against the euro depreciated slightly towards the end of April and at the end of the month stood at EUR/HRK 7.47, or up by 0.4% from the end of March (Figure 21). In April, the kuna depreciated significantly against the pound sterling. By contrast, the domestic currency appreciated moderately against the yuan renminbi and the US dollar, primarily as a result of the strengthening of the euro against these currencies on the global foreign

¹ For details, see Kunovac, D., and B. Špalat: Nowcasting GDP Using Available Monthly Indicators (WP-39, October 2014).

exchange market. Thus the index of the nominal effective exchange rate of the kuna at the end of April was only 0.2% higher than at the end of March (Figure 22).

Short-term interest rates on the European money market remained in negative territory in April, which was the effect of the expansionary monetary policy of the ECB and high euro area banking system liquidity. The overnight interest rate, EONIA, ended the month of April at -0.35%, and the six-month EURIBOR at -0.25% (Figure 24). The risk premiums for European emerging market economies decreased slightly from the end of 2016. Although the risk premium for Croatia (51 basis points) witnessed the largest fall, it was still high relative to that of peer countries (Figure 25).

The liquidity of the domestic financial market held steady at a high level, influenced by the expansionary monetary policy of the CNB. Relative to the first three months of 2017, the average surplus liquidity slightly decreased and stood at HRK 15.6bn in April, while the average weighted interest rate in interbank trade on the overnight market increased from 0.02% in March to 0.05% in April (Figure 54). At the same time, the interest rate on one-year kuna T-bills without a currency clause remained unchanged at the level of 0.45% (Figure 28).

Bank interest rates on loans to non-financial corporations and households declined in March 2017 (Figures 28 and 29). In the corporate sector, this was contributed to by loans above HRK 7.5m (Figure 30). If original new corporate loans are observed, the decline is noticeable in the interest rates on loans for working capital, contrary to kuna investment loans indexed to foreign currency, the interest rate of which has increased since the beginning of the year (Figure 31). The interest rates on original new household loans decreased in March (Figures 32 and 33). The interest rates on total household and corporate time deposits increased moderately in March to 0.63% and 0.47% respectively, although still at low levels (Figures 34 and 35). As a result of the movements in interest rates on total new loans and deposits, their spread fell to six percentage points in March from 6.54 percentage points in February, while the gap between interest rate spreads on loans and deposits remained almost unchanged from the previous month, at a level slightly below five percentage points (Figure 37).

Monetary developments in March 2017 were marked by a moderate increase in the net foreign assets (NFA) and a significant decrease in the net domestic assets (NDA) of the monetary system; combined, they led to a fall in total liquid assets (M4). Net foreign assets of the CNB underwent a sharp rise generated by the inflow of funds from the foreign bond issue into the government's foreign currency deposit with the central bank, while net foreign assets of credit institutions decreased. The increase in the government's foreign currency deposit also resulted in a fall in net monetary institutions' claims on the central government, which resulted in a notable decrease in net domestic assets. Despite a monthly fall in total liquid assets, this monetary aggregate grew noticeably on an annual level (4.2%, exchange rate changes excluded) (Figure 49). In the structure of M4, such developments were still mostly driven by an increase in money (M1), which reached 21.1% at the end of March (Figure 48), in particular demand deposits of households and non-financial corporations. By contrast, the decline in foreign currency deposits continued on both monthly and annual levels (Figure 52).

Credit institutions' placements to domestic sectors (except

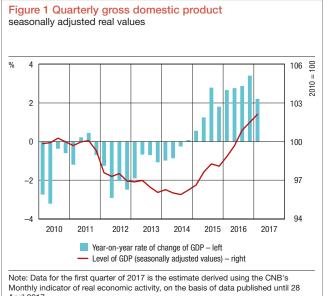
the government) rose by 0.7% in March (transaction-based). The growth in placements slowed down slightly at an annual level, so that at the end of March it stood at 0.8%, while at the end of 2016 it stood at 1.0% (Figure 40). This was mostly due to a slowdown in the growth of placements to non-financial corporations (to 0.7%), while in households, the annual growth of placements continued to strengthen, standing at 1.4% at the end of March (Figures 41 and 42). The growth of kuna placements to households was particularly strong (Figure 43). The nominal stock of placements was 1.7% lower at the end of March 2017 than at the end of the same month of the previous year, reflecting a partial write-off of loans to households indexed to the Swiss franc, the sale of banks' non-performing placements and the strengthening of the kuna against the euro. As for lending to the government, bank placements to the central government increased by 3.5% at the end of March 2017 relative to the same month of the previous year (Figure 46).

Gross international reserves of the CNB stood at EUR 14.4bn at the end of April, having decreased by EUR 1.7bn during the month, which was mostly the result of the decrease in the foreign exchange of the government deposited with the CNB in the amount of EUR 1.1bn and EUR 0.4bn in the agreed foreign repo transactions (Figure 56). The foreign currency inflow from a foreign eurobond issue in March was used to settle the liability on the foreign bond, which matured at the end of April. Net usable reserves decreased moderately during April, standing at EUR 12.1bn, down by 0.4% from the end of the previous year.

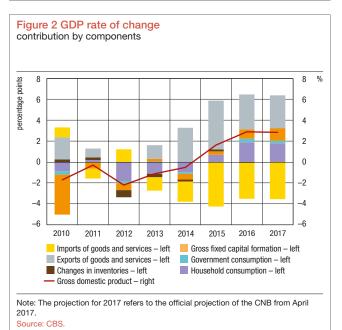
Following stagnation at the end of 2016, net external debt rose by EUR 0.5bn in the first two months of 2017 (Figure 60). This was mostly contributed to by banks, which, as in the same period of the previous year, increased their net liabilities by EUR 0.3bn. In addition, non-financial corporations also saw their net debt position worsen by EUR 0.2bn, mostly to affiliated enterprises abroad. Net financial positions of the central government and the CNB with respect to the rest of the world remained almost unchanged. Total gross external debt of the Republic of Croatia increased in the same period (Figure 61).

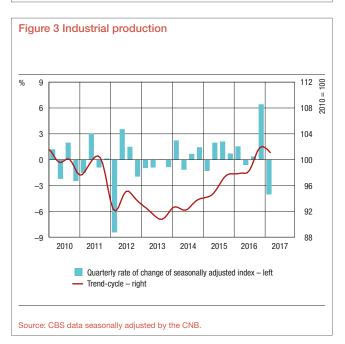
The Excessive Deficit Procedure Report from April confirmed the continuation of a strong fiscal consolidation in 2016. The general government deficit stood at 0.8% of GDP in 2016, or down by 2.6 percentage points from 2015. The fall in the deficit is reflected by favourable cyclical movements, resulting in a robust growth in tax revenues, but also an increase in other revenues (after correction for absorbed EU funds, which have no impact on the budget deficit), with the share of total revenues in GDP increasing from 45.2% in 2015 to 47.6% in 2016. At the same time, the growth in the majority of expenditure categories was limited (so that the share of expenditures in GDP decreased from 0.2 percentage points to 48.4% of GDP). This strong decrease in fiscal deficit, in the circumstances of favourable economic and foreign exchange movements, also caused the first annual decrease in the share of public debt in GDP after 2007.

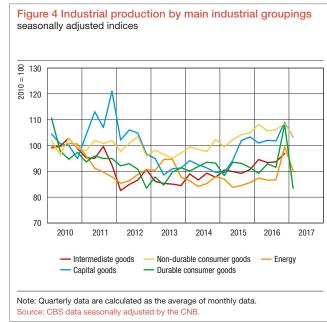
According to Ministry of Finance data, in the first two months of 2017 the deficit at the central government level stood at HRK 1.6bn (HRK 0.9bn in the same period of the previous year), probably mostly as a result of a much earlier disbursement of state budget subsidies. At the end of January 2017, public debt stood at HRK 286.3bn, a reduction of HRK 2.7bn from the previous month, which partly mirrors the appreciation of the kuna exchange rate.

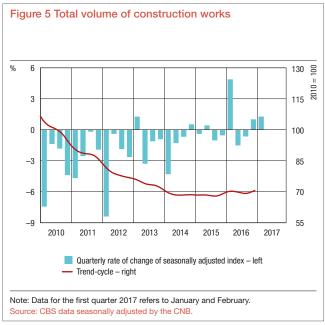


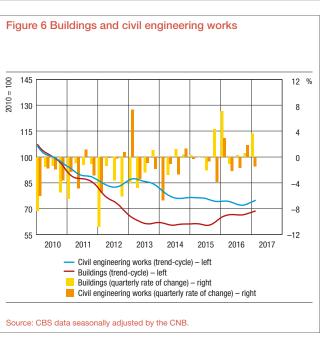
April 2017. Sources: CBS data seasonally adjusted by the CNB and CNB calculations.

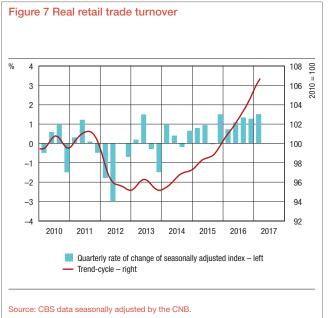


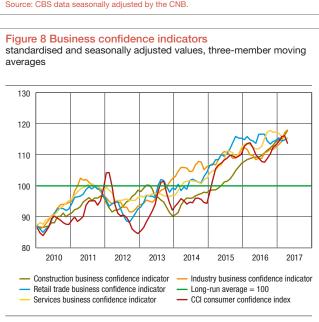


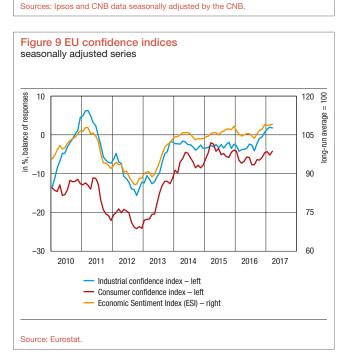


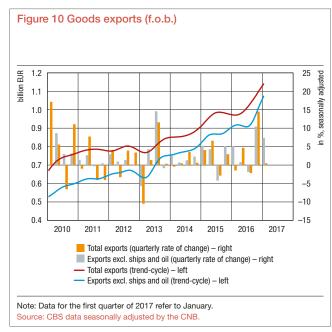


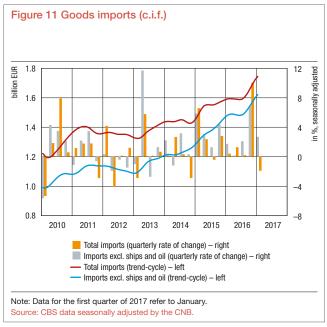


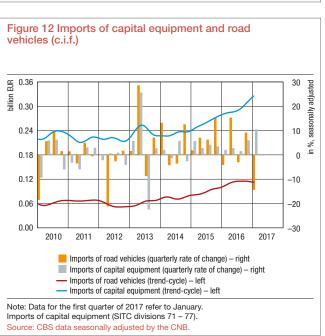


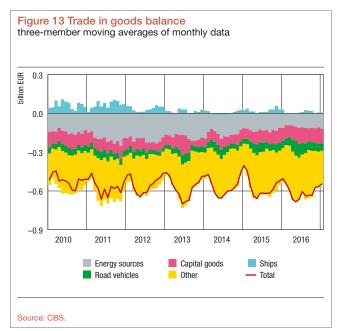


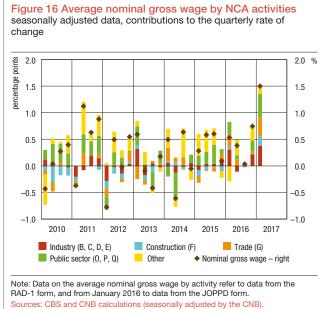


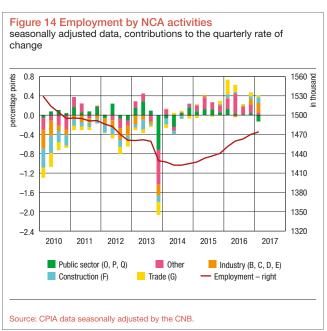


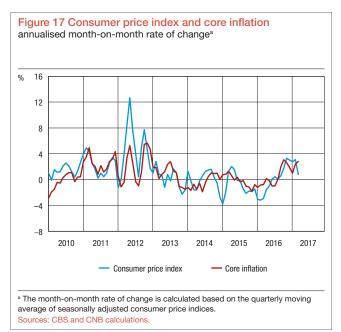


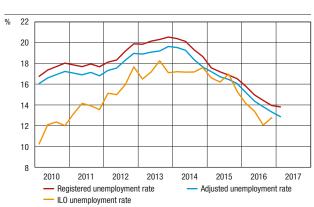








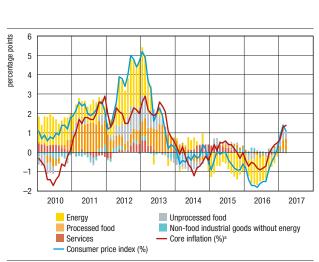




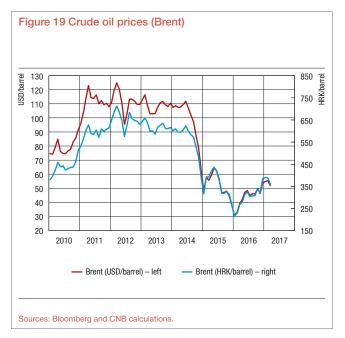
Note: Since January 2015, the calculation of the registered unemployed rate has been made using the data on employed persons from the JOPPD form. The adjusted unemployment rate is the CNB estimate and is calculated as the share of the number of registered unemployed persons in the working age population (unemployed persons and persons insured with the CPIA).

Sources: CBS and CNB calculations (seasonally adjusted by the CNB).

Figure 18 Year-on-year inflation rates and components' contribution to consumer price inflation



^a Core inflation does not include agricultural product prices and administrative prices. Sources: CBS and CNB calculations.





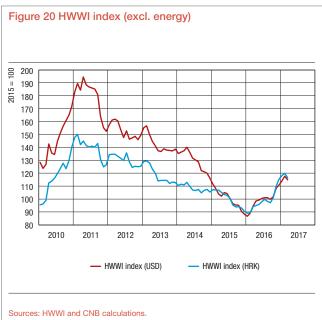


Figure 22 Nominal and real effective exchange rates index, 2010 = 100 130 120 110 100 90 2002 2010 2012 2013 2003 2001 2004 2007 2011 Real (PPI) Real (ULC total economy) Real (CPI) Real (ULC manufacturing) Note: The real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by producer prices includes the Croatian index of industrial producer prices on the total market. The unit labour cost is calculated as the ratio between compensation per employee and labour productivity (defined as GDP per person employed), while the real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by unit labour costs is the result of the interpolation of

Table 1 Price indicators

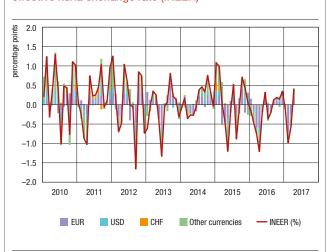
year-on-year and month-on-month rates of change

	Year-on-year rates		Month-on- month rates	
	2/17	3/17	3/16	3/17
Consumer price index and its compo	onents			
Total index	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.3
Energy	1.4	-0.1	0.6	-0.9
Unprocessed food	6.3	4.2	-0.5	-2.4
Processed food	2.0	2.8	-0.7	0.1
Non-food industrial goods without energy	0.7	0.3	3.4	3.0
Services	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Other price indicators				
Core inflation	1.3	1.4	0.8	1.0
Index of industrial producer prices on the domestic market	2.6	1.1	1.1	-0.3
Brent crude oil price (USD)	67.2	33.0	17.7	-6.4
HWWI index (excl. energy, USD)	32.1	21.6	6.3	-2.2

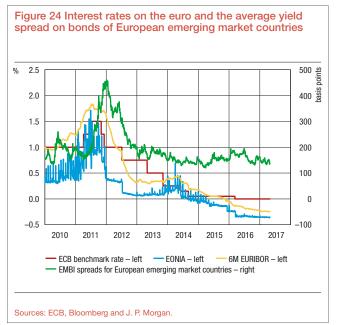
Note: Processed food includes alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Sources: CBS, Bloomberg and HWWI.

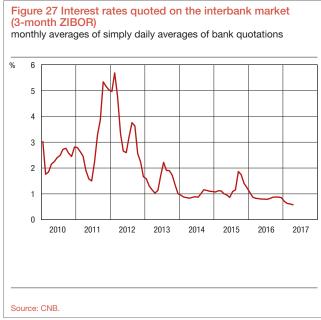
Figure 23 Contributions^a of individual currencies to the monthly rate of change of the average index of the nominal effective kuna exchange rate (INEER)

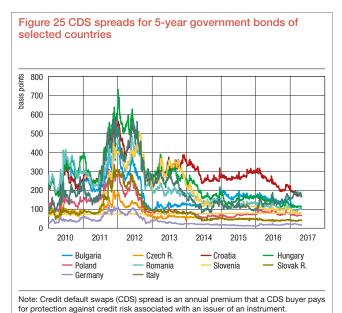
quarterly values. A fall in the index indicates an effective appreciation of the kuna.



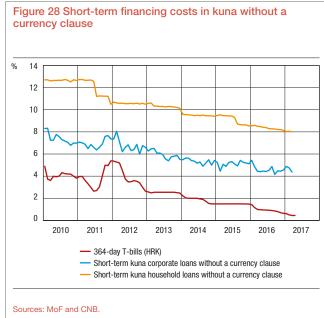
 $^{^{\}rm a}$ Negative values indicate contributions to the appreciation of the INEER. Source: CNB.

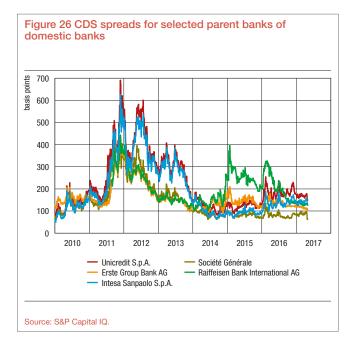


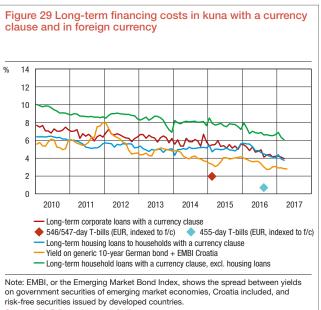




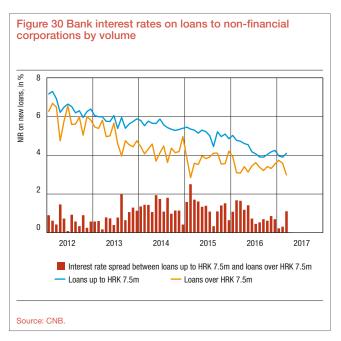
Source: S&P Capital IQ.

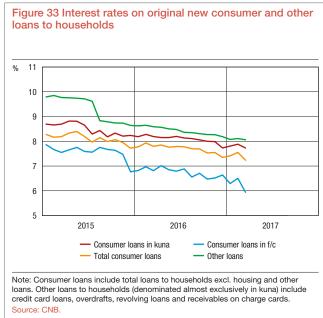


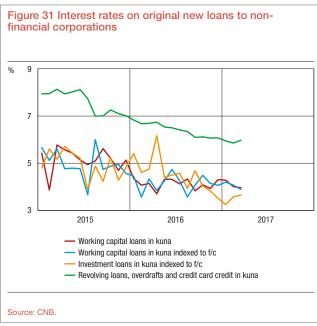


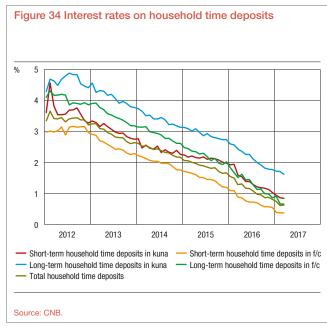


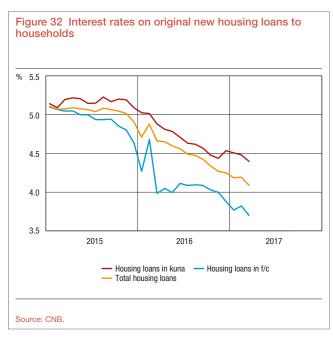
Sources: MoF, Bloomberg and CNB.

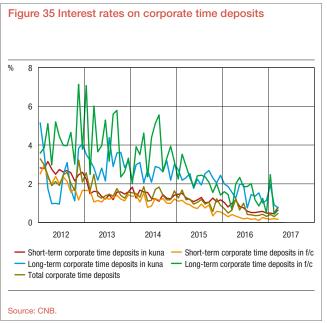


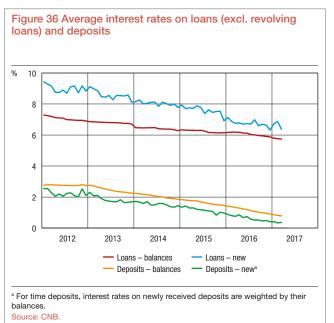


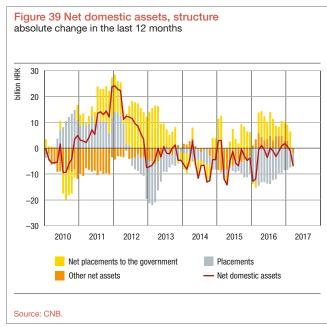


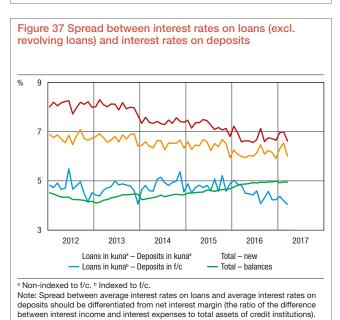


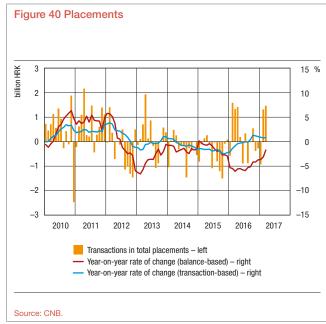


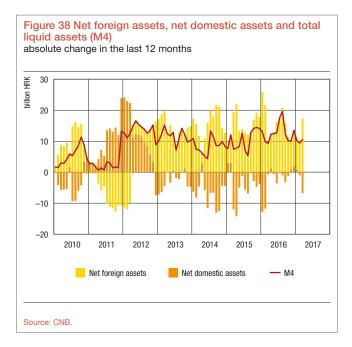


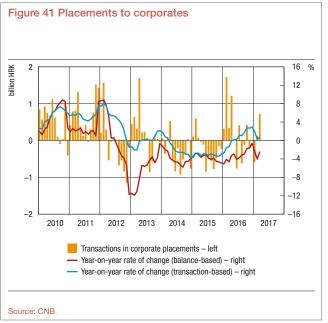


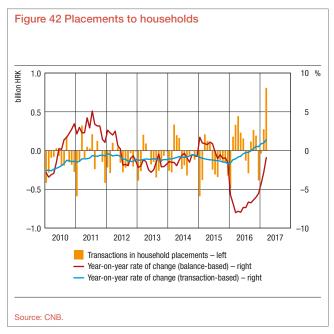


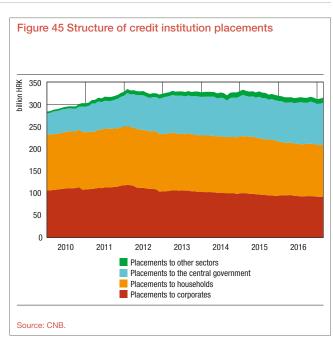


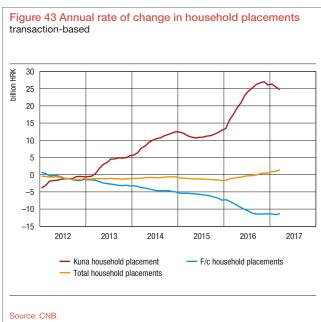


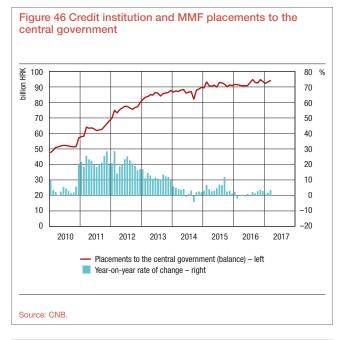


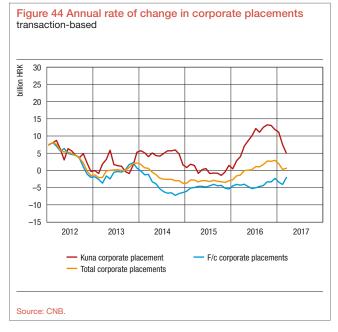


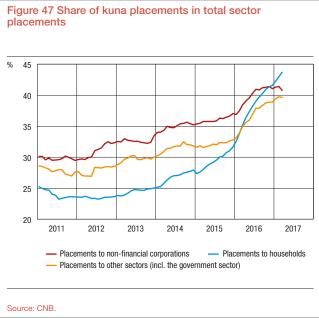


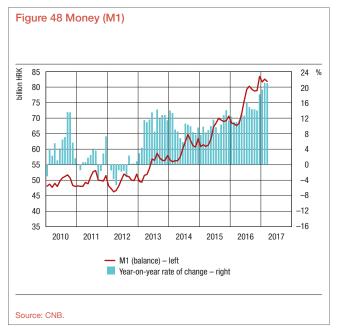


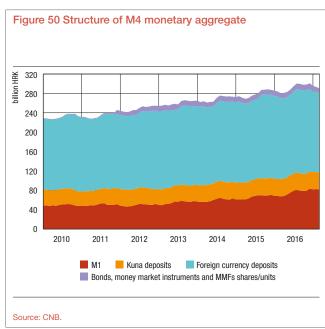


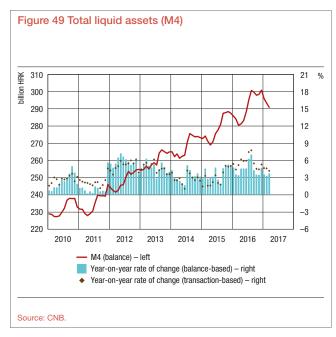












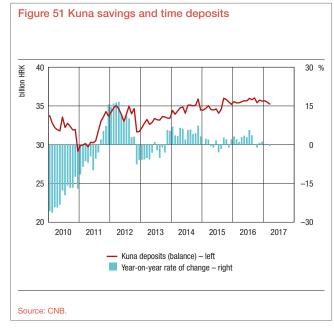
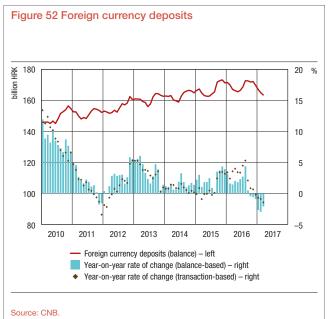
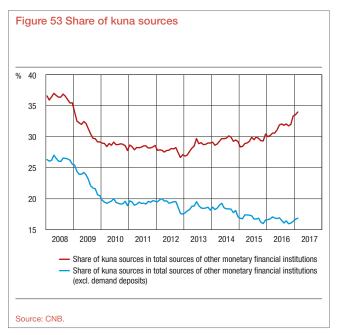


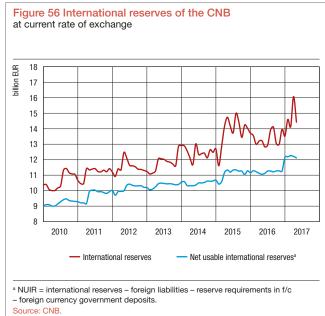
Table 2 Balance of payments^a preliminary data, in million EUR

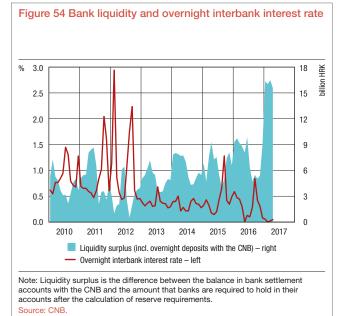
				Indices
	2015	2016	2015/ 2014	2016/ 2015
Current account	2,098.8	1,168.8	236.6	55.7
Capital account	307.7	515.0	437.9	167.4
Financial account (excl. reserves)	1,113.7	1,419.8	113.2	127.5
International reserves	745.3	-264.7	-	-
Net errors and omissions	-547.5	-528.7	108.7	96.6

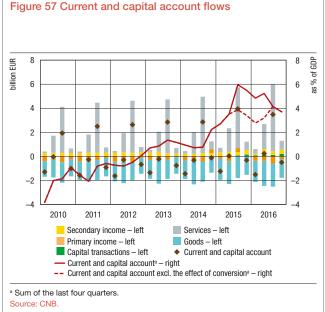
 $^{^{\}rm a}$ In line with the 6th edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6).











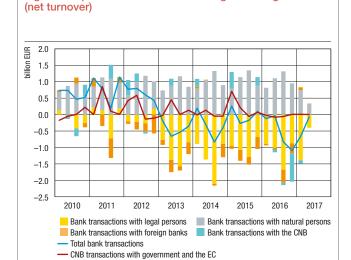
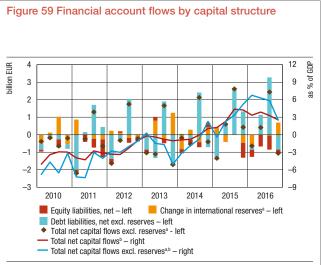


Figure 55 Spot transactions in the foreign exchange market

Figure 58 Financial account flows by type of investment 6 GDP 3 4 2 2 0 -3 -8 Direct investment – left Portfolio investment – left Other investment – left Change in international reserves - left Financial derivatives - left - Total net flowsa - right ^a Sum of the last four quarters. Note: A positive value indicates net outflow of equity abroad (including on the basis

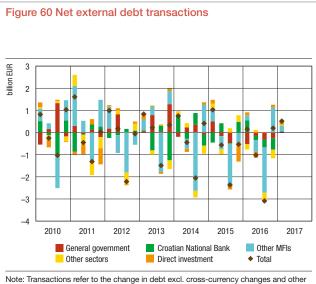
Note: Positive values indicate net purchases and negative values indicate net sales Legal persons include the government. Data for the second quarter of 2017 refer to April. Source: CNB

of the growth in international reserves).



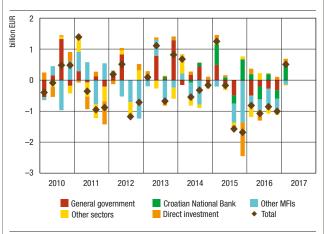
 $^{^{\}rm a}$ The change in gross international reserves is reported net of the liabilities of the CNB. $^{\rm b}$ Sum of the last four quarters.

Note: A positive value indicates net outflow of equity abroad. Net flows represent the difference between the change in assets and the change in liabilities. Source: CNB.



adjustments. Net external debt is calculated as gross external debt stock net of foreign debt claims. Data for the first quarter of 2017 refer to January and February.





Note: Transactions refer to the change in debt excl. cross-currency changes and other adjustments. Data for the first quarter 2017 refer to January and February.

Figure 62 Gross external debt end of period EUR 50 billion 40 30 20 10 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 General government Croatian National Bank Other MFIs Other sectors Direct investment Source: CNB.

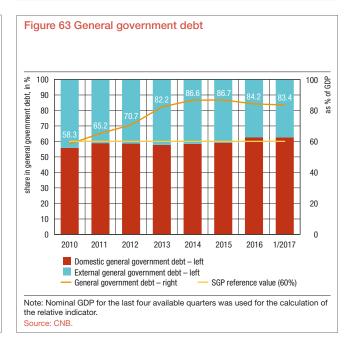


Table 3 Consolidated general government balance ESA 2010, in million HRK

Jan Dec. 2015	Jan. – Dec. 2016
150,891	163,232
19,969	21,739
65,482	69,589
39,778	40,807
25,662	31,096
162,237	166,014
55,896	55,942
5,916	5,386
11,925	11,162
40,099	41,106
26,967	27,478
10,297	10,913
11,137	14,028
-11,346	-2,783
	2015 150,891 19,969 65,482 39,778 25,662 162,237 55,896 5,916 11,925 40,099 26,967 10,297 11,137

Sources: Eurostat and CBS

Table 4 Consolidated central government net borrowing GFS 2001, in million HRK

	JanNov. 2015	Jan. – Nov. 2016
1 Revenue	116,719	124,046
2 Disposal of non-financial assets	447	375
3 Expenditure	119,607	121,269
4 Acquisition of non-financial assets	3,975	3,552
5 Net borrowing (1+2-3-4)	-6,416	-400
Sources: MoF and CNB calculations.		

Table 5 General government debt

in million HRK

	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017
Change in total debt stock	1,491	-2,733
Change in domestic debt stock	2,106	-1,365
- Securities other than shares, short-term	851	192
- Securities other than shares, long-term	1,134	-338
- Loans	120	-1,219
Change in external debt stock	-614	-1,369
- Securities other than shares, short-term	94	100
- Securities other than shares, long-term	-828	-1,090
- Loans	119	-379
Memo item:		
Change in total guarantees issued	72	4

Abbreviations and symbols

Abbrevi	ations	NCS	- National Clearing System
BIS	Bank for International Settlements	n.e.c.	not elsewhere classified
bn	– billion	OECD	- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and De-
b.p.	– basis points		velopment
BOP	– balance of payments	OG	– Official Gazette
c.i.f.	- cost, insurance and freight	R	- Republic
CBRD	- Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development	o/w	of which
CBS	- Central Bureau of Statistics	PPI	– producer price index
CCI	 consumer confidence index 	RTGS	- Real-Time Gross Settlement
CDCC	 Central Depository and Clearing Company Inc. 	Q	– quarterly
CDS	– credit default swap	RR	- reserve requirement
CEE	- Central and Eastern European	SDR	- special drawing rights
CEFTA	- Central European Free Trade Agreement	SITC	- Standard International Trade Classification
CEI	 consumer expectations index 	SGP	 Stability and Growth Pact
CES	- Croatian Employment Service	VAT	– value added tax
CM	- Croatian Motorways	WTO	 World Trade Organization
CIHI	- Croatian Institute for Health Insurance	ZMM	– Zagreb Money Market
CLVPS	- Croatian Large Value Payment System	ZSE	 Zagreb Stock Exchange
CNB	– Croatian National Bank		
CPF	 Croatian Privatisation Fund 	Three-le	etter currency codes
CPI	 consumer price index 	ATS	– Austrian schilling
CPIA	- Croatian Pension Insurance Administration	CHF	– Swiss franc
CR	– Croatian Roads	CNY	– Yuan Renminbi
CSI	 consumer sentiment index 	DEM	– German mark
DAB	- State Agency for Deposit Insurance and Bank Reso-	EUR	– euro
	lution	FRF	- French franc
dep.	- deposit	GBP	pound sterling
DVP	- delivery versus payment	HRK	– Croatian kuna
EC	- European Commission	ITL	– Italian lira
ECB	– European Central Bank	JPY	– Japanese yen
EFTA	- European Free Trade Association	USD	– US dollar
EMU	- Economic and Monetary Union		
ESI	 economic sentiment index 	Two-let	ter country codes
EU	– European Union	BG	– Bulgaria
excl.	- excluding	CZ	- Czech R.
f/c	– foreign currency	EE	– Estonia
FDI	- foreign direct investment	HR	– Croatia
Fed	– Federal Reserve System	HU	- Hungary
FINA	– Financial Agency	LV	– Latvia
FISIM	– financial intermediation services indirectly measured	LT	– Lithuania
f.o.b.	– free on board	PL	- Poland
GDP	– gross domestic product	RO	– Romania
GVA	gross value added	SK	– Slovak R.
	Croatian Financial Services Supervisory Agency	SI	- Slovenia
HICP	- harmonised index of consumer prices		
ILO	- International Labour Organization	Symbo	ls
IMF	- International Monetary Fund	_	– no entry
incl.	- including		– data not available
IPO	- initial public offering	0	 value is less than 0.5 of the unit of measure being
m	– million		used
MIGs	main industrial groupings	Ø	- average
MM	- monthly maturity		. – indicates a note beneath the table and figure
MoF	– Ministry of Finance	*	- corrected data
NCA	 National Classification of Activities 	()	 incomplete or insufficiently verified data
NCB	national central bank	` '	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
. –			